

Department of Finance and Administration – Policy 17
Long Distance and Cellular Phone Calls

(Revised March, 2004)

Introduction and Background

1. This Policy Statement has been issued to ensure long distance calls from state phones and cellular phones are used exclusively for state business, and to establish appropriate procedures within state agencies to ensure monitoring by state agencies of long distance calls made from state offices. This Policy Statement is issued under the general accounting authority granted by State law in T.C.A. 4-3-1007 (6).
2. This policy is applicable to all state departments, agencies, boards and commissions with the exception of colleges and universities, and is effective when issued. State departments and agencies shall develop revised procedures to ensure compliance with this policy within 60 days of issuance.

General Rules – Long Distance Calls

3. Long distance calls placed on state phones are for conducting state business only and should not be used for personal calls. Any long distance calls of a personal nature placed from state facilities should be conducted on the employee's time and using the employee's personal telephone calling card or other appropriate means. Any calls made using state issued calling cards are to be used only for conducting state business.

General Rules – Cellular Phones

4. State issued cellular phones are to be used only for State of Tennessee business, regardless of whether the telephone calls are local or long distance. Personal use of cell phones will cause increases in minutes of use, resulting in inappropriate billing to the State of Tennessee. Personal cell phones instead of State cell phones should be used to make personal calls. Long distance calls on State cell phones should be made in compliance with the same guidelines outlined in this Policy Statement. Reimbursement for use of personal cell phones is covered under the Comprehensive Travel Regulations.

Monitoring Telephone Bills – Agency Responsibility

5. Each agency will develop a written plan to monitor telephone bills based on the need for long-distance telephone use by that department. The plan should recognize that supervisors within divisions of that agency are often more aware of the types of phone calls that employees should be making, appropriate locations to which calls are placed, and the appropriate length of calls. Management should make use of reports available from the Department of Finance & Administration Office of Telecommunications to identify unusual and inappropriate phone calls, investigate the nature of inappropriate calls, and take whatever action management determines necessary. The Comptroller of the Treasury should be notified of significant abuse or fraudulent acts. Every effort should be made to review bills within 15 days of their receipt.

Annual Review

6. Each department or agency shall on an annual basis summarize the effectiveness of that agency in monitoring phone calls and provide suggestions for improvement. This annual review may be conducted by the agency's internal audit section, chief fiscal officer or other body developed by management for this purpose.

Guidelines for Monitoring Telephone Bills

7. In identifying unusual and inappropriate calls, management may use all or part of the following in developing its plan:
 - a. Calls made before and after working hours, including weekends and holidays
 - b. Frequent calls not to a recognizable business number
 - c. Calls which cost more than a specified amount
 - d. Calls which are more than a specified length
 - e. Calls to foreign countries, resort areas, or other unusual areas of the country
 - f. Collect calls
 - g. Credit card calls
 - h. Tolls calls not made using the state network

If circumstances warrant, a section or unit of an agency may be required to log all long distance calls for an appropriate time

Collect Calls

8. It is the general policy of the state not to accept collect calls. However in the event of an emergency or other unusual situation, it may be necessary for an agency to accept a collect call. If a collect call must be accepted, the employee should obtain the callers name and phone number and return the call using State telephone lines. Agencies and department may note in their written plan circumstances in which collect calls would be accepted.

Credit Card (Calling Cards)

9. Credit cards (or calling cards) issued by the State are to be used only for conducting State business. Because credit card calls lend themselves to possible abuse, each department should carefully manage the issuance and use of state issued calling cards.